

# Postmating transcriptional changes in reproductive tracts of con- and heterospecifically mated *Drosophila mojavensis* females

Jeremy M. Bono<sup>a,1,2</sup>, Luciano M. Matzkin<sup>b,1</sup>, Erin S. Kelleher<sup>c</sup>, and Therese A. Markow<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Biology, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, CO 80918; <sup>b</sup>Section of Ecology, Behavior and Evolution, University of California at San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093-0116; <sup>c</sup>Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853; and <sup>d</sup>Section of Cell and Developmental Biology, University of California at San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093-0116

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In internally fertilizing organisms, mating involves a series of highly coordinated molecular interactions between the sexes that occur within the female reproductive tract. In species where females mate multiply, traits involved in postcopulatory interactions are expected to evolve rapidly, potentially leading to postmating-prezygotic (PMPZ) reproductive isolation between diverging populations. Here, we investigate the postmating transcriptional response of the lower reproductive tract of *Drosophila mojavensis* females following copulation with either conspecific or heterospecific (*Drosophila arizonae*) males at three time points postmating. Relatively few genes (15 total) were differentially regulated in the female lower reproductive tract in response to conspecific mating. Heterospecifically mated females exhibited significant perturbations in the expression of the majority of these genes, and also down-regulated transcription of a number of others, including several involved in mitochondrial function. These striking regulatory differences indicate failed postcopulatory molecular interactions between the sexes consistent with the strong PMPZ isolation observed for this cross. We also report the transfer of male accessory-gland protein (Acp) transcripts from males to females during copulation, a finding with potentially broad implications for understanding postcopulatory molecular interactions between the sexes.

gene expression | reproduction | sexual selection | sexual conflict | speciation

In internally fertilizing organisms, the female reproductive tract serves as the arena for a series of highly coevolved molecular interactions between the sexes that are critical for successful reproduction (1, 2). Postcopulatory interactions should further increase in complexity in species in which females mate with more than one male, as intense sexual selection propels the rapid evolution of traits mediating female choice, male competitive ability, and sexual conflict (3, 4). This, in turn, may facilitate divergence of such traits between populations following different coevolutionary trajectories, leading to postmating-prezygotic (PMPZ) reproductive isolation (5). Consistent with these expectations are the rapid evolution of morphological and molecular reproductive traits associated with postcopulatory processes (6) and the recognition that PMPZ barriers can serve as potent and rapidly evolving forms of reproductive isolation (5).

The availability of genomic resources for an increasing number of species provides a platform for elucidating the molecular basis of postcopulatory molecular interactions between males and females. For example, recent genomic studies on *Drosophila melanogaster* (7–14), *Anopheles gambiae* (15), and *Apis mellifera* (16, 17) have begun to characterize the female postmating response by identifying changes in the transcriptome and/or proteome of mated females. In *D. melanogaster*, sperm or other specific components of the seminal fluid are known to induce some of these changes, which ultimately trigger physiological responses in females (18). Male accessory-gland proteins (Acps), in particular, modulate a variety of physiological processes in *D. melanogaster* females including immune response, oogenesis, oviposition, sperm transfer and storage, and female receptivity

(18). Although considerable progress has been made in understanding the nature and scope of postcopulatory molecular interactions between males and females, comparable studies on additional species, especially those with different mating systems, are necessary to generalize these findings. Moreover, although accumulating evidence suggests that postcopulatory incompatibilities between the sexes often result in significant PMPZ reproductive isolation between species (5), the molecular and genetic bases of such incompatibilities have yet to be identified.

*Drosophila mojavensis* and *Drosophila arizonae* are recently diverged (<1 Mya) sister species (19) with partially overlapping distributions in the arid regions of southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. The mating systems of these two species are characterized by frequent female remating relative to *D. melanogaster* (20), along with extensive intersexual coevolution of postcopulatory traits (21–23), including rapid evolution of both male and female reproductive proteins (24–28). Consistent with expectations, interspecific crosses also exhibit strong PMPZ isolation, particularly those involving *D. mojavensis* females. Heterospecifically mated *D. mojavensis* females exhibit perturbations in a number of processes occurring within the female reproductive tract that result in a high incidence of failed fertilizations, a reduced rate of oviposition, and ultimately the production of few hybrid offspring (25). These problems are associated with deficiencies in the heterospecifically mated female's storage and retention of sperm, and also in degrading the insemination reaction, a temporary mass that forms in the uterus immediately after conspecific copulation (25). In contrast to conspecific matings, where the mass is typically eliminated within several hours, following heterospecific matings the mass often persists for days, interfering with oviposition and in some cases even permanently sterilizing females (21, 25). Whereas pre- and postzygotic isolating barriers between *D. mojavensis* and *D. arizonae* vary in strength depending on the source population of males and females (29–31), PMPZ isolation is strong in all crosses involving *D. mojavensis* females, suggesting that this barrier may have been among the earliest to evolve.

In the present study we sought to identify and compare the transcriptional changes that occur in female *D. mojavensis* reproductive tracts following conspecific and heterospecific matings at three postcopulatory time points. We first compared virgin and conspecifically mated females to identify genes involved in the normal female postmating response. We then compared this

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Data deposition: The data reported in this paper have been deposited in the Gene Expression Omnibus accession no. GSE27454, and the sequences reported in this paper have been deposited in the GenBank database (accession nos. JF512479–JF512494).

<sup>1</sup>J.M.B. and L.M.M. contributed equally to this work.

<sup>2</sup>To whom correspondence should be addressed: E-mail: jbono@uccs.edu.

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We verified microarray results for three genes (*DmoglAcp2*, G117858, and G123890) using quantitative PCR. Working from the same mRNA pools used in the microarray, we synthesized cDNA using ABI's high-capacity RNA-to-cDNA kit. Quantitative PCR reactions were performed on an ABI 7000 Sequence Detection system machine using ABI's Power SYBR Green PCR kit. We ran each gene (including a control: Ribosomal subunit 18S) in triplicate using gene specific primers (Table S4). Statistical significance was calculated by performing 10,000 bootstraps using the REST 2008 software (44).

Analysis of the representation of gene ontology terms was performed using the online Database for Annotation, Visualization and Integrated Discovery (DAVID) at <http://david.abcc.ncifcrf.gov/>. The analysis was based on the level of gene ontology term representation of *D. melanogaster* orthologs of the differentially expressed *D. mojavensis* genes.

**Verification of Male-Derived Transcripts.** To determine whether the increase in transcript abundance of previously identified male Acps following mating was due to female up-regulation of these genes or whether they were included in the male ejaculate, we created cDNA libraries from the original aRNA of two samples used in the microarray experiment (conspecifically mated/15 min and heterospecifically mated/15 min). Libraries were constructed using the Bio-Rad Iscript select cDNA synthesis kit with random primers. We used PCR to amplify 23 transcripts that included previously identified *D. mojavensis/D. arizonae* Acps (27, 45) and/or previously identified transcripts from *D. melanogaster* male reproductive tract (46, 47), in

addition to the 18 genes that differed in transcript abundance between the conspecifically mated females and virgins (Table 1). We then sequenced the amplified products and used fixed differences between the species to determine whether transcripts from the heterospecific cross were from *D. arizonae* (i.e., of male origin) or *D. mojavensis* (i.e., of female origin). Sequences from this analysis that are longer than 200 bp are deposited under GenBank accession nos. JF512479–JF512494; all sequences, including those under 200 bp, are included in Dataset S1.

To independently verify the transfer of male transcripts, we repeated the heterospecific matings using the same *D. mojavensis* line and randomly chosen males from 12 *D. arizonae* lines from Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico (not including the original line used in the microarray). All procedures (matings, RNA extraction, cDNA synthesis) were identical to the original experiment except that we did not perform the mRNA amplification step.

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